

there in public meetings and took a lot of flak and listened to a lot of contrary opinions, some much positive, some negative.

When he created the national monument, the question was, OK, who is going to get it going? Who is going to make it happen? And Tim Hudson answered the call. He spent the last 5 years up there working with the local community. He has done a huge amount of work with the local community to give them confidence in what the Park Service is doing. He has worked with the people, the Friends of Katahdin Woods and Waters. He has worked with the people who are helping to develop this wonderful facility for more and more people every year. I think this year, the visitation will be 35, 40, or 55,000 people. It is a spectacular spot.

Tim Hudson started from scratch. I just want to recognize Tim and the thousands like him throughout this country who work on our behalf quietly every day without a Senator making a speech about them, but they go about their work on behalf of the American people. I just didn't want Tim Hudson's retirement to go unremarked because not only does he deserve recognition, so many of his colleagues, whether it is in the Park Service, the Department of Agricultural, the Department of Defense, the Department of Commerce, the Internal Revenue Service, all the people who work on behalf of this country, the brave men and women in the Department of State who work around the world, often in dangerous situations—we need to recognize them. We need to support them. We need to let them know that we know what they are doing and that we care what they are doing.

That is why I am here today to talk about Tim Hudson, a guy who has made a difference for this country for 54 years, and he has made a huge difference for the people of Maine over the past 5 years.

I want to say thanks to Tim and his wife Mary and wish him the best in his retirement. He is the best of what America is all about. He has served us well and he has served the people of Maine well and I appreciate it and thank him for it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

AFGHANISTAN

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, September 11, 2001, is a date that is seared in the memories of those of us who lived through that day and experienced the trauma and the fear of that day.

What has always struck me about that day and the days following, even standing here 20 years later, is how the entire free world stood united against what we saw as a common threat. It came to us as naturally as breathing. We understood that as witnesses to mass murder, we shared a duty to avenge those who had died. It may

have been fear that forced us together, but in the days that followed the attacks, we, as Americans, rediscovered the ties that have bound us for centuries and solidified our faith in the common cause of freedom.

But the more time that passes between each September 11 and the September 11 attacks, the more obvious it becomes that history slips away from those who fail to heed its lessons. The defensive action we took as a nation in the wake of the attacks was among the most forceful and effective the world had ever seen, but still, even 20 years later, it is obvious that our work in Afghanistan and the Middle East is far from over.

My colleague from Maine talked about the withdrawal from Afghanistan. I would say, as I talk to Tennesseans, it is not withdrawing from Afghanistan; it was the manner in which the Biden administration chose to end the military mission in Afghanistan that didn't seem to reflect the reality of what was going on on the ground.

Last week, I sent a letter to Chairman REED, with several of my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee, asking for formal hearings on the withdrawal. We need to know exactly what happened, how they were advised. Without sworn testimony from Secretary Austin, General Milley, General McKenzie, and General Miller, we will never be able to untangle the chaotic course of events that led to the deaths of 13 servicemembers in Kabul and the abandonment of an unknown number of American citizens and our Afghan partners.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the letter be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
September 8, 2021.

Senator JACK REED,
Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee,
Washington, DC.

CHAIRMAN REED: It is necessary and appropriate for Congress to examine the manner in which our military mission ended in Afghanistan. We should do so with transparency, candor, and a dedication to ascertaining the facts without regard to politics.

We understand that in the coming months, many committees will claim the authority to ask questions regarding our military's withdrawal. Yet, because our committee bears the special responsibility of authorizing and overseeing America's armed forces, we acutely feel the obligation to seek answers. The American people, and in particular many of those who serve our country in uniform, are hurting, angry, and disappointed. We owe them a clear and comprehensive understanding of what happened, why, and how best to learn from these events for the future. Time is of the essence. These hearings should be our top priority when the Senate reconvenes.

We write to formally request that the Senate Armed Services Committee fully exercise its oversight authority by holding both opened and closed hearings on this matter and that our committee ask the Department

of Defense to preserve any and all records pertaining to the conclusion of our operations in Afghanistan. In particular, we seek sworn testimony from Secretary Lloyd Austin, General Mark Milley, General Frank McKenzie, Jr., and General A. Scott Miller.

We owe it to our nation, those who served, their families, and our allies and partners who fought alongside us, to preserve the records of how our fight in Afghanistan concluded. The insights we gather will help prevent future loss of American blood and treasure, a solemn responsibility and sacred trust we believe all members of our committee will seek to uphold.

Sincerely,

Tommy Tuberville, Roger Wicker, Tom Cotton, Joni K. Ernst, Thom Tillis, Dan Sullivan, Kevin Cramer, Rick Scott, Marsha Blackburn, Josh Hawley, U.S. Senators.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Beyond the fact-finding mission, I plan to use these hearings to impress upon my Democratic colleagues the importance of the words that we use to describe our enemies, how we talk about them, how we frame their actions.

Since day one—since day one of this administration—the Biden administration has used their words to rehabilitate the Taliban in the eyes of their radical base. The problem, of course, is that their diplomatic calls for inclusivity and equality, this supports a lie about who the Taliban actually is. The Taliban—like ISIS, like al-Qaida—is a terrorist organization. They rule by fear. They rule through public beatings, rape, forced marriage, brutality against anyone who questions their regime, against anyone who disagrees with them. Look at the way women and children are treated.

Now, in my opinion and from a lot of Tennesseans whom I have talked with as I have been home, they feel that expecting terrorists to behave like normal people is reckless and stupid. And they feel that some of the actions that have come from this administration and comments that they would have that expectation would reflect that reckless stupidity. These are terrorist organizations.

If you need another example of this, just look at their approach to border security. Even before the transfer of power, massive migrant caravans had begun moving out of Central America and toward the southern border. They were eager to take advantage of then-Candidate Biden's promises of open borders and amnesty for all.

Where did that get us? Well, this is what we have learned. The CBP reports that migrant encounters along the U.S.-Mexico border reached a 20-year high in July. That is right, massive numbers. They heard those promises. So what did they do? They got to work contacting a cartel, and they made this journey after, of course, they paid the cartel. Most of the nearly 200,000 people our Border Patrol caught in July were traveling alone. Families might be holding back, but the international traffickers certainly are not holding back.

On August 29, CBP officers in Memphis found three kilograms of

ketamine in a shipment of furniture from France coming in because of the cartels.

In the first week of September, CBP officers in Texas seized two separate stashes of cocaine with a combined street value of almost \$300,000. In the month of July alone, cocaine seizures increased 91 percent, and meth seizures increased 20 percent. Why are they doing this? They know that the border is open.

On September 8, Texas State Troopers and CBP officers stopped two human smuggling attempts running just hours apart from each other. Our CBP officers have made it standard procedure to scour remote terrain for migrants who have been abandoned and left to die by their cartel transporters. Why is this happening? Because it is obvious to everyone, from the migrants, the cartels to the foreign officials who refuse to police their own borders, that the Biden administration won't do anything to stop it. Tennesseans see this as reckless. It makes no sense.

I talked to some local law enforcement officers this week. They are seeing an uptick in meth, fentanyl, and heroin on the streets—all coming out of Mexico. They repeatedly say: Secure the border.

We live in the greatest Nation on Earth. We are still the world's best example for freedom, and we are the last hope for millions of people suffering under authoritarian rule. It is important to understand that it doesn't have to be the way it has been when you look at this withdrawal from Afghanistan, when you look at this open border, when you look at the fact that, yes, this year, the border patrol has apprehended terrorists at the southern border. That is right. It doesn't have to be that way, but when you have weak leadership—leadership that is not focused, leadership that says “it is my way or the highway”—and when you have that reckless disregard for the truth, that can and will destroy us.

The actions of the Biden administration have already emboldened our enemies. They have made our allies doubt our commitment to them and to the work that they are trying to do to advance freedom for themselves—the work that we are doing to advance freedom here in this country and abroad.

So I would encourage my Democratic colleagues to resist the urge to fall in line with the White House on the issue of the Afghanistan withdrawal and to, instead, join me in demanding as many hearings as it takes to restore accountability and transparency and to find out exactly what happened.

What were our military advisers saying to President Biden? To Vice President HARRIS? To Jake Sullivan? To Susan Rice? To Antony Blinken? What were they telling them? What was the expectation? Did they have a plan? Did they plan to leave Americans behind enemy lines? Did they plan to give up

Bagram Airfield? Did they plan to leave all of the equipment for the Taliban to use? Did they plan on that? Was it intentional that they made those decisions or was it reckless stupidity that got us here?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

REMEMBERING RICHARD KINKOFF III

Mr. RUBIO. Madam President, last weekend, we lost a truly selfless public servant when Richard Kinkoff III, from my office, passed away.

He joined our office as an intern in 2013, and he literally never left. He kept showing up after his internship had ended until we finally had to hire him full time to work with us because he kept showing up every single day. And he kept at it because he wanted to serve. He wanted to serve the people of Florida. That is exactly what Rich did for the past 8 years in leading our team and graciously responding to hundreds of thousands of constituents' inquiries.

I think it is important to note that it is tedious work, but, for him, it was not a formula or an exercise in checking boxes. He was passionate about that kind of work. He took time to listen to the callers who would call. He would read the emails. He sat down and talked to constituents, and then he worked with others on our team to get them answers. He believed in his work. He never let the process take the purpose out of the work that he did or that the team was doing.

Two years ago, his work was recognized when our office received the Democracy Foundation's award for constituent service, an award that we would not have received had he not been part of our team. But for Rich, honestly, it wasn't about recognition; it was about service.

It is no surprise that he took a particular interest in veterans' issues. He treated every constituent case with the respect it deserved, but he had a special passion for making sure our selfless veterans were not left behind or forgotten in the bureaucracy. That is the one word that, I think, keeps coming back as we talk in our office with the staff, and it keeps coming back as we have reflected on his life over the past week—selfless.

Rich had a pickup truck, a big pickup truck, which made him pretty popular with colleagues, with friends, with friends of friends. People need to move, and if you have a truck, you know everybody always wants to borrow it. Rich being Rich, he was always there for them. If your car broke down, Rich was there. If you were an intern in need of career advice, Rich was there. If you needed a ride from the airport, Rich was there. He would even pull himself away from a Tampa Bay Lightning game to lend a helping hand.

Now, look. I have no doubt that Rich would be embarrassed by all of this because it was never about him or for him.

In a letter to the Christian church in Philippi, Paul and Timothy wrote:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves.

Those who knew him can say that Rich answered that call time and again.

And now, for reasons that we cannot explain or know or understand, he has answered a different call, but I do know that we are all better for knowing him, and so are countless others who never knew his name. He was selfless. He was noble. He was a decent man. And as we honor and celebrate his life, let us hope to follow in his example in all that we do here.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, first, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to complete my remarks before the scheduled 5:30 p.m. vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Madam President, prior to the August recess, I, along with Senator MURPHY, asked unanimous consent to confirm almost 30—30—highly qualified Foreign Affairs and Development nominees who were languishing on the Senate floor. I noted then the danger of leaving these posts unfilled at a time that we were facing such a confluence of global challenges. Two Republican Senators blocked each one of our requests. Days later, Haiti was hit with a devastating earthquake, and Afghanistan imploded.

While I continue to believe it is essential that this body swiftly confirm every single foreign affairs and development professional whose nomination is pending on the Senate floor, I rise again today to seek unanimous consent to confirm four nominees who are critical to addressing the crisis in Afghanistan and Haiti.

Ambassador Donald Lu, a career Foreign Service Officer, is the President's nominee to serve as Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs.

The last Assistant Secretary for this Bureau was confirmed during the Obama administration. To say that this nomination is long overdue is an understatement, particularly now, given the incredibly dangerous situation in Afghanistan.

Post-withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, the State Department is the main implementer of U.S. policy in the country. And given the regional implications of Afghanistan policy, it is essential that this role be filled with a seasoned and experienced diplomat like Ambassador Lu.

The region is also home to several other countries critical to U.S. interests. From Pakistan to India, to the countries of central Asia, the United States must be present in order to advance those interests and counter the malign influence of both Russia and China.